A
DIALOGUE
BETWIXT A
MASTER and his SCHOLAR,
IN WHICH ARE DISCUSSED
THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS:

BY

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MASTER of the BOARDING-SCHOOL, *Church Street,*

Stoke Newington, Middlesex.

The Impropriety of the external Parade of some of the Clergy, and its Inconsistency with the sacred Office they assume——The erroneous ideas that many are too apt to form of an University Education, and the real Advantages there enjoyed by the Student——The Cause why some return as ignorant from College, as when they first set out upon their Studies——A proper exercise of our Reason in Matters of Religion——Why it ought in many Instances to give way to Divine Revelation, and a Plan laid down, by which contending Parties in Christianity may become more reconciled——The Existence of the Deity, and his constant Government of the World against the attacks of Atheists and Infidels.

Γνωθι σεαυτον.

LONDON: Printed in the Year

MDCCLXXXVIII.

And sold by T. HOOKHAM, *New Bond Street, Piccadilly;*
And SCATCHERD and WHITAKER, *Ave Maria Lane, Paternoster Row.*

BRITISH MUSEUM

PREFACE.

THE Author of the following pages is very ſenſible there are many obſervations in them which will expoſe him to the reſentment of thoſe who come within the various characters alluded to, and that the method he has purſued in the diſcuſſion of his ſubjects, (although the ancients approved of a dialogue as the moſt eligible way of expoſing abſurdities) will, he is perſuaded, meet with the diſapprobation of ſome. The literati will be too apt to think lightly of the whole production, from the author having endeavoured in one part to ſhew, that

it is very poſſible for knowledge and ſcience to be acquired by thoſe who are no collegiates. They may probably conclude, that inſtead of endeavouring to decry the abſurdities of other men, he ought carefully to have corrected his own, and not to have commenced author *poſt meridiem vitæ*. He anſwers, that they would do well to recollect the old motto,

———— "*tenet inſanabile multos*
Scribendi cacoethes."

And, that an unwearied aſſiduity will ſurmount the greateſt difficulties, if what Horace ſays, be true,

"*Nil mortalibus arduum eſt.*"

That there are many and ſingular advantages to be derived from an univerſity education he will readily admit, and that thoſe ſtudents are moſt fortunately happy who embrace the opportunity to apply them: but it does not follow from thence, that no

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ſound learning is to be attained without the walls of a college. Not to mention a Simpſon and ſome of his cotemporaries who are now no more, there are ſeveral living evidences who are not inferior to ſome of the firſt literary men in the kingdom in philoſophy and ſcience, and men whoſe ambition has never ſoared higher than the dwelling of a cottage, or a ſtation of an inferior nature, and whoſe conduct in life has rendered them highly worthy of imitation. There are ſome of the inferior clergy to be met with, whoſe piety and learning may very juſtly claim priority, and yet they are moſt ſhamefully neglected, and ſuffered to ſpin out a dreary exiſtence in the fatigues of duty, and in the midſt of indigence and poverty. So infatuated are the people in ſome pariſhes, where the clergymen are appointed to livings and lectureſhips by a majority of votes of the inhabitants, that

they for the moſt part give way to the prejudice of party, and very frequently their ultimate views extend no farther than to ſerve ſome private and ſiniſter end, or to oppoſe ſome worthy character for no other reaſon than that he happens, unfortunately for his own cauſe, to be a man of ſtrict diſcernment, and of a rational underſtanding. While ſuch principles mark the line of conduct of the generality of mankind, who ought at leaſt to be the protectors of true learning and piety, it is much to be feared, that ſome of the churches will long remain to be abundantly ſupplied with ignorance and ſuperſtition.

Many are the cenſures which have been caſt upon biſhops for their ſupineneſs in that part of their duty which relates to the appointment of the inferior clergy; but the author is clearly of an opinion, that as two livings out of five are gene-

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rally at the diſpoſal of the laity, and for the moſt part are diſpoſed of to relatives and friends, without the leaſt reſervation to merit, and that if the Clergy were enabled to approximate nearer to a point of equality, the power of appointment could not poſſibly be inveſted in better hands than thoſe who have public authority.—" *Jucundum non eſſet viro probo accipere dona, quæ non ignoraret dari animo malo. Si pietas adſit, nihil non poteſt eſſe gratum Deo: contra autem, ſi deſit.*"

A DIALOGUE

ERRATA.

Page	*Line*		
8	19	*for* frailies	*read* frailties
17	21	deducing	adducing
82	10	it is not	nor is it
—	15	But	And
—	21	internal	eternal
84	5	external	eternal
—	15	*after the word* ſenſible,	*put a* comma
88	9	*dele* are eſſential to it, *and read*, and are eſſential to it, forms one compound Idea.	
—	11	*for* and it is	*read* which is
91	9	*read* it may be urged	
—	14	*read* remain	
92	3	*dele* either	
93	8	*for* when	*read* then
—	20	and	are
100	3	centres	orbits
—	4	to theſe motions of, *r.* to which motions in	
—	7	theſe	and that thoſe
—	19	ſaid	ſaw
104	17	work	world
—	22	contemplation	contemplate
107	5	refuſe	refute
108	13	*dele* of	
—	21	*for* Precepts	*read* Prieſts
—	22	are	are the
—	26	Publications	Publiſhers
109	11	they	can

A

DIALOGUE,

BETWIXT

A MASTER and his SCHOLAR.

SCHOLAR. SIR, I had the pleaſure (during the vacation) to ſpend ſeveral days with my old ſchool-fellow Mr. Sharp, who is now returned from the univerſity.

MASTER. I ſuppoſe Mr. Sharp, who has already ſpent five years at the univerſity, is now become an adept in divinity and metaphyſics; pray what an account does he give of the advantages to be derived from an univerſity education.

S. Sir,

S. Sir, you cannot, I am perſuaded, be ignorant of his aſſiduity and attention to his ſtudies during his reſidence here, or of his utter averſion to every ſpecies of vice and immorality: but you would be aſtoniſhed to find what an alteration has taken place in him in the courſe of a few years.

M. I am truly ſenſible of Mr. Sharp's good nature and affability, and that his mind, if properly cultivated, is capable of the greateſt maturity; but pray, Mr. Thomas, what is the alteration you allude to in Mr. Sharp.

S. Sir, to be ſincere with you, my father, who was educated at the ſame college, (from whence he received his degree of doctor of divinity) calls my quondam ſchool-fellow, Mr. Nonſuch; nay, he has gone ſo far as to ſay he is every thing but what he ought to be.

M. Perhaps

M. Perhaps your father (for whom I have the greateſt regard) might have been a little out of humour, at the time he hazarded his opinion relative to Mr. Sharp's conduct and behaviour; at leaſt charity induces me to ſuppoſe it: but pray what do you mean by the terms, Mr. Nonſuch, and that he is every thing but what he ought to be: I am not ſcholar enough to underſtand ſuch language; pleaſe to explain yourſelf.

S. I thought, Sir, you would criticiſe as uſual upon my expreſſions, and demand a reaſon for every thing I have ſaid.

M. You may depend, Mr. Thomas, I ſhall invariably purſue the ſame line of conduct whenever I enter upon ſerious converſation with you: divine revelation dictates that we ſhould do to others as we would they ſhould do unto us: now Mr. Sharp, who was formerly one of

of my pupils, and who has either deſervedly or undeſervedly met your father's diſapprobation, may juſtly claim my protection on the preſent occaſion. As he is not here to anſwer for himſelf, I ſhall inſiſt upon you giving me an unequivocal account of his conduct and behaviour; which I ſhall not fail to inſert in my memorandum book, for any future references I may have occaſion to make, in caſe he ſhould do me the honor of his company; pray Mr. Thomas proceed.

S. My father ſays he is a fop in dreſs, a pedant in converſation, and what every wiſe, and prudent man, would conſider as a compleatly learned coxcomb.

M. Your father (as well as myſelf) is an old man, and old people, as they grow in years, although not much to their credit, generally grow illnatured and peeviſh: Mr. Sharp may probably interſperſe in his converſation ſome lofty

and

and ſublime expreſſions, not altogether ſo agreeable to the ſubject matter of diſcourſe, or he may be apt to ſoar a little too far into the wide field of fancy and imagination: a young man like Mr. Sharp, of a very promiſing genius, is not always to be confined to the ſtiff rules of formality, practiſed among the ſenior and more reſpectable part of the clergy: in regard to his dreſs, I think there is not much room for your father's criticiſm; at leaſt he will do me the juſtice to acknowledge ſcripture on my ſide, where it commands judgment to begin at home: I recollect a time when your father, prior to his entering at the college, wore a tail to his hair as long as from my finger's end to my elbow, and as for his ruffles, they were from their ſize, better calculated for Queen Elizabeth's ruff, than to be tacked to the wriſtbands of a ſhirt ſleeve.

S. Sir, as the time you allude to was prior to my exiſtence, I ſhall not enter upon a vindication of my father's conduct; but ſhall relate ſome particulars relative to Mr. Sharp's behaviour during his ſtay at our houſe. As I had not had the honor to hear him preach ſince his return from the univerſity, I requeſted my father to let him preach on the Sunday ſubſequent to Chriſtmas-day, which he very reluctantly complied with. Mr. Sharp was highly pleaſed with the idea of preaching before ſo elegant and reſpectable a congregation, and therefore prepared himſelf accordingly. At ſeven o'clock on the Sunday morning he enquired for a hair dreſſer; I told him our footman who ſhaved and dreſſed my father would immediately wait upon him: he returned for anſwer, that it was always a rule with gentlemen to have their own hair dreſſers and the beſt hands in the town,

town, that our footman was not regularly brought up to the buſineſs, and muſt therefore of courſe be a novice in the art: for his part he was a gentleman by birth and fortune, and had great expectations from ſome of the firſt perſons in the kingdom: he had always ſupported a genteel appearance, and was determined to be as forward in externals as any of his clerical brethren. He made good his aſſertions on this occaſion, for the hairdreſſer was, by our clock, juſt two hours in performing his office to his employer's ſatisfaction, having dreſſed and undreſſed his hair three times ſucceſſively before it would ſit to his liking; and, I believe, in the courſe of the time, he had occaſion to look in the glaſs not leſs than twenty times. A very pretty paſtor of Chriſt's flock, thought I; if this is your boaſted univerſity education, which has ſo materially prejudiced the mind of a

once worthy young man; heaven preſerve me from ſuch contamination.

M. Mr. Thomas, you are but a ſtripling in years and experience, and therefore more liable to form a wrong judgment of things, than thoſe who have arrived at an age of maturity. Mr. Sharp's knowledge of the world originates from his great connections at the univerſity, and without doubt his expectations are very conſiderable. The perſon who dreſſed him was probably a bungler in his profeſſion, and I do not know any thing more irritating to the paſſions of a man of genius and learning, than to have his time ſpent in trifles when upon the verge of preferment. I conſider Mr. Sharp as a man, and ſubject like myſelf to the frailies of human nature, and ſhall always be charitable enough to make every reaſonable allowance for the foibles of his youth: but pray what other

things

things have you ſeen of him than thoſe you have already exhibited againſt him; pleaſe to proceed.

S. Your partiality for Mr. Sharp is ſo very great, that it would be in vain for me, or any other perſon, to endeavour to point out the impropriety of his conduct to your ſatisfaction, or even credit to oneſelf. If you had been preſent at our parade through the ſtreets, it would have afforded you an ocular demonſtration of his folly, pride, and oſtentation: you would have there beheld him with his head dreſſed in the elegance of faſhion, with his hat under his left arm, ſtrutting like a counſellor at Weſtminſter Hall. Your curioſity might have led you to the church, where you would have ſeen him in a variety of attitudes: his right-hand at one time diſpoſing of his curls, while his left ranged his band; at another time you would have ſeen

him placing his elegant ring on his little finger in ſuch a poſition as not to eſcape the attention of his audience. You might have followed him to the veſtry, and have heard him take leave of the gentlemen, church-wardens, and other officers, in theſe words: Come, Mr. Thomas, it is time for us to be gone; I am to dine to-day with Sir William, and ſup with my Lord John in the evening, where I purpoſe ſleeping, as we are all three in company with his grace the Duke of A——, engaged in a ſhooting party to-morrow: in ſhort, the whole tenor of his converſation during our walk home was taken up with balls, plays, operas, maſquerades, and card-parties. Now, Sir, Mr. Sharp may become an object of your pity and compaſſion, but judge impartially for yourſelf, whether his conduct merits your countenance or diſapprobation.

M. Mr.

M. Mr. Thomas, you are a little too haſty, and I ſhall be free enough to tell you, that if you take ſuch liberties with your tutor, when at the univerſity, you will be apt to render yourſelf ridiculous. I have no particular partiality for Mr. Sharp, more than for you or any other gentleman; but true philoſophy teaches us to judge of cauſes from their effects; and as it was impoſſible for me to form any rational judgment of your firſt aſſertion relative to his conduct, it was but reaſonable I ſhould enquire particulars, and endeavour, if poſſible, to obtain a proper explanation. I aſſure you, I am an enemy to pride and oſtentation, and thoſe things which you have now related by no means meet my approbation. The ridiculous parade of ſome of our clergy has done great injury to the cauſe of true religion; but I would not have you, Mr. Thomas, to give way to the public

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tide of cenſure, which, upon every little occaſion, flows like a torrent. Your ideas of the univerſity are erroneous and partial. There are many advantages to be derived from an univerſity education; the opportunities afforded are very great: you have there the beſt libraries in Europe, and ſome of the firſt ſcholars in the univerſe for your tutors, who, upon all occaſions, obſerve the greateſt regularity and decorum.

S. If the advantages are ſo great, what is the cauſe of ſo many returning as ignorant from the college as when they firſt ſet out upon their ſtudies? It was a common obſervation of a late reverend divine, who was formerly chaplain at different times to two of the biſhops, that if a young gentleman from the univerſity offered himſelf a candidate for holy orders, he was ſure to receive every indulgence poſſible, for the credit

credit of the place, to enable him to paſs his examination; but if on the other hand, a perſon who had not an univerſity education to boaſt of, offered himſelf a candidate, he was ſure to undergo a very ſevere examination: and yet, notwithſtanding ſuch indulgence on one ſide, and ſeverity on the other, the reverend doctor had the mortification to find, where one who had no univerſity education to boaſt of, was returned unqualified, three from thence were rejected.

M. It will require no great depth of erudition to account for the evil you complain of. The ignorance of thoſe who have returned from the univerſity unqualified, has frequently originated, not from a want of opportunity, but from an inattention to ſtudy and the inſtruction of their tutors. The bad example of thoſe young gentlemen whoſe friends have intruſted them with more money

money than they have wit, has tended much, not only to contaminate the minds of the other collegians, but alſo very much to prejudice the plan of education laid down by their reſpective preceptors. There are ſome parents to be found, whoſe ambition has betrayed them into the groſſeſt errors, by endeavouring to procure for their ſons, at the expence of the reſt of the family, what the world terms a liberal education. A boy is ſent by his parents to a public ſchool, where he probably continues for twelve or thirteen years; from thence he is removed to the college, deſtitute either of natural genius, or common acquired abilities, requiſite to proſecute that line of ſtudy which alone can qualify the gentleman and the ſcholar: nay, he might have done credit to his father's profeſſion, by following the plough-tail, cultivating the garden, or ſtanding behind

behind the counter. Society is deprived of a uſeful member for no other reaſon, than becauſe the father will have the ſon what no one of the family ever was before, a gentleman.

S. Sir, the reaſon you have aſſigned for the irregularities committed by ſome of the ſtudents at the univerſity, very forcibly convinces me, that Mr. Sharp, if he had not been ſo plentifully ſupplied with money by his mother, might probably have returned from the college, what moſt of his friends had reaſon to expect he would, both the ſcholar and divine.

M. I ſhould ſuppoſe there is not the leaſt ſhadow of doubt remains upon your mind, relative to his abilities as a ſcholar. You know he was well acquainted with the claſſics prior to his leaving ſchool. Virgil, Horace, Juvenal, and Plautus, have made no inconſiderable part of his ſtudies.

dies. The Greek Teſtament, Xenophon, and Homer, have not eſcaped his peruſal, but what proficiency he has made ſince, during his reſidence at the univerſity, is not at preſent for me to determine. From the recent account you have given of him, I ſhould rather be inclined to believe it is no ways conſiderable. I ſuppoſe, Mr. Thomas, you have had ſome converſation together upon religion, pray what are his ideas of the public worſhip of the deity and his attributes?

S. Sir, he talks much of the forms and ceremonies of the eſtabliſhed church, the authority of the biſhops and curates, and boldly claims implicit obedience to the dictates of the clergy in all things, from the authority of ſcripture.

M. I muſt humbly beg Mr. Sharp's pardon, when I pronounce him (in ſuch principles) totally ignorant of the ſcriptures.

tures. I have paid as much attention to the various readings of the old and new Teſtament as moſt private men, but I know of no ſuch commands. There are too many at this day who begin their diſputes with maintaining their opinions of religion from ſcripture by falſe principles; and in fine, applaud themſelves in having prevented the diſcovery of truth, by clouding it with falſe and erroneous interpretations.

S. Thought is free, and ſo is ſpeech, ſo long as it is kept within due bounds; and, I preſume, I may fairly conclude from your arguments, that I have a right to judge for myſelf, and not to build my faith upon the opinion of any man.

M. You are certainly right in your laſt obſervation: it is the province of the clergy to explain the ſcriptures, and to ſupport their doctrines, by deducing ſound arguments; but their hearers have

a right to judge for themſelves, and to obey that moſt admirable precept of St. Paul, "Prove all things; hold faſt that which is good."

S. As I have been fortunate enough in my laſt remark to meet your approbation, let me requeſt your indulgence of a few more queſtions for the ſake of my information.

M. Mr. Thomas, you are heartily welcome to my indulgence, and whatever information is in my power to adminiſter, which may tend to your edification, I aſſure you ſhall not be withheld. Nothing affords me more pleaſure than the inveſtigation of truth, and when once I have diſcovered it, I hold it as an indiſpenſable duty I owe to the Deity, who I hope has graciouſly accompanied me in my reſearches, freely to impart it.

S.

S. I would ſuppoſe there are as many different ſects in religion as there are days in the year, and yet each of their reſpective paſtors lay claim to the rectitude of their doctrines, as founded upon the authority of ſcripture: pray, Sir, does not this appear to you a manifeſt abſurdity.

M. You now lay me under a neceſſity of recapitulating ſome things I have already advanced, and of going over the ſame ground of argument: I told you that every man had a right to judge for himſelf in religious matters, and not to give implicit obedience to the dictates of the clergy or miniſters of any denomination; what you have obſerved relative to the various opinions of men ſo prevalent at this period, may be conſidered as a proof beyond every poſſibility of contradiction in favor of my argument.

S.

S. I think I have heard you aſſert, that reaſon is the touchſtone of truth, and that ſcripture is the rule by which reaſon muſt form a right judgment of religion.

M. To ſuppoſe a creature to have reaſon and that he is not to make uſe of it, is to ſuppoſe a contradiction. Nay, what is the religion of all rational beings but what the ſcripture terms it, a reaſonable ſervice. A blind ſubmiſſion to the ſentiments of other men is ſo far from doing credit to true religion, that it very frequently prejudices its cauſe, and prevents that progreſs in virtue and morality which otherwiſe would be made from a proper exerciſe of our faculties.

S. Then you ſuppoſe the greater ſtreſs you lay upon reaſon the more you extol revelation; becauſe it is deſigned to exalt our rational nature.

M.

M. This is certainly the deſign of religion, but the clergy and miniſters of Chriſt's church in many places have intirely defeated this deſign, and ſo far debaſed human nature, as to render it fierce and cruel: they have made divine revelation the pretence of filling the chriſtian world with animoſity, hatred, perſecution, ruin and deſtruction; in order to obtain an abſolute dominion over the conſciences and properties of the laity.

S. But pray, Sir, are not many of an opinion, that by laying ſuch a ſtreſs on reaſon and judgment we ſet aſide revelation.

M. By no means: a proper exerciſe of our faculties, by impartially and candidly examining the ſcriptures, enables us to ſupport its doctrines againſt the attacks of infidels.

S. I am rather of opinion with Mr. Sharp, that there are not many divines who are diſpoſed to extol reaſon to the diſparagement of authority; and I am inclined to believe, that every country ſhould have an eſtabliſhed church, the forms and ceremonies of which ought to be ſtrictly adhered to by its members.

M. Mr. Thomas, you are but a young man, and cannot be ſuppoſed a competent judge of theſe things; I will therefore quote biſhop Hoadley's remarks for your information; this ſtrenuous aſſerter of our religious as well as civil rights, ſays, "authority is the greateſt and moſt irreconcilable enemy to "truth and argument, that this world "ever furniſhed out: all the ſophiſtry; "all the colour of plauſibility; all the "artifice and cunning of the ſubtleſt "diſputer in the world, may be laid "open, and turned to the advantage

"of

" of that very truth, which they de-
" ſigned to hide, or to depreſs: but
" againſt authority there is no defence."
And after having ſhewn that it was authority that cruſhed the incomparable ſentiments of Socrates; and that it was authority which enabled the jews and heathens to combat the truth of the goſpel; he ſays, " When chriſtians in-
" creaſed to a majority, and came to
" think the ſame method to be the only
" proper one, for the advantage of their
" cauſe, which had been the enemy
" and deſtroyer of it; then it was the
" authority of chriſtians, which, by
" degrees not only laid waſte the honor
" of chriſtianity, but well nigh extin-
" guiſhed it among men. It was author-
" ity which would have prevented all re-
" formation where it is; and which has
" put a barrier againſt it, wherever it
" is not. It was authority which hindered

" the

" the voice of the Son of God himſelf
" from being heard and which alone
" ſtood in oppoſition to his powerful
" arguments, and his divine doctrine."

S. Sir, I acknowledge my youth and inexperience, and ſhall, with the greateſt humility, ſubmit my judgment to your correction; but in doing this, what foundation have I to rely upon, that you will not lead me into an error when I embrace your ſentiments of religion. You have claimed the privilege of judging for yourſelf in matters of faith, and have graciouſly condeſcended to grant me the ſame indulgence whenever I hear or read the doctrines of other men: pray am I to infer from thence that you mean only to ſubmit your opinion to my ſerious conſideration, and to leave me at liberty either to embrace or reject it.

M.

M. Mr. Thomas, when I mentioned your years and inexperience, I did not mean to call your reaſon in queſtion, but as ground (although the ſoil may be tolerably good) if not properly cultivated, will in time, become fruitleſs and barren, ſo will the mind in like manner if not frequently exerciſed, of courſe become incapable of forming a right judgment: let it ſuffice to ſay, that I mean to appeal to your underſtanding only, and that you are as much at liberty to give or withold your aſſent to my doctrine, as to any other man's whatever. I have been long in purſuit of religious truths, and in the midſt of my journey I have endeavoured, as far as the frailties of human nature would admit of, to diveſt myſelf of party prejudices: what progreſs I have made, my converſation and conduct muſt in future determine. I pray God whenever

ever I enter into a religious converſation, and offer my ſentiments to you or any other gentleman, that the following quotation from Horace may be my conſtant motto:

———*Si quid noviſti rectius iſtis.*
Candidus imperti; ſi non, his utere mecum.

S. The major part of mankind being deſtitute of a learned education, and many of the lower claſs ſo ſtupidly ignorant, as not to be capable of diſtinguiſhing the letters of the alphabet; in ſuch a predicament, what is *he* to do who has not the ability to read and examine the ſcriptures?

M. Mr. Thomas, I am highly pleaſed with your queſtion; it does you great credit as a young man, and affords me no ſmall ſatisfaction in having it in my power to give you ſome information, and to ſet you right in this matter. The perſon who comes under the deſcription

you

you mention, no doubt labours under a great inconvenience, and may juſtly be denominated very unfortunate: he is not only deprived of the conſolation of reading the ſcriptures for his own improvement, but alſo of conveying information to his relatives and friends, who may have occaſion for his private inſtruction. Yet great as this inconvenience may be, he owes much to divine providence for the gift of a good underſtanding, and the frequent opportunities of hearing the ſcripture expounded by the paſtors of Chriſt's flock, ſome of whom, not only of the eſtabliſhed church, but alſo of other denominations, are deſervedly diſtinguiſhed for their learning and piety.

S. But pray, Sir, is not ſuch a perſon liable to be led away by falſe notions and erroneous doctrines, as too many are at this day?

M.

M. No doubt of it, Mr. Thomas, if he gives way to the prejudices of the times, and does not make a proper uſe of his faculties.

S. If you uſe the word *faculties* as a ſubſtitute for reaſon, it will remain a quere, whether every man is not liable to be deceived in his principles of religion: and if I recollect right, I have heard you ſay, that reaſon is not always a ſure and ſafe guide, and what ſhe has been found deficient in, revelation is ſuppoſed to have amply ſupplied.

M. The precepts of the goſpel, which allude to the duty of man, are ſo plain and eaſy, that whoever can either read, or attend divine worſhip where the ſcriptures are read, has no excuſe for the neglect of his duty. " The greateſt men, " and thoſe who diſtinguiſh themſelves " themoſt in the ſciences they ſtudy, " ingenuouſly confeſs, that there is a vaſt

" vaſt number of things above their
" knowledge, and which the mind of
" man is not capable of comprehending.
" By this confeſſion, they leſſen a num-
" ber of difficulties, which is but la-
" bour in vain for thoſe who will en-
" quire into them; and who, after they
" have ſtudied a long time, think they
" know ſomething, when they have
" only got a knack of confounding their
" ideas, and of communicating their ig-
" norance and prejudice to ſuch as have
" the misfortune to be inſtructed by
" them."

S. Pray, Sir, do not we find almoſt every where a great diverſity of ſentiments upon the ſame ſubjects, and conſequently a great diverſity of errors? yet for all this, a great number of people of every denomination ſuffer themſelves to be ſeduced, and blindly ſubmit to the authority of pretended phi-

loſophers and divines without under-ſtanding their opinions.

M. " Credulity, and the vanity of " deſiring to know every thing, are " the two ſources of error and igno-" rance. The truly learned and pru-" dent ſpeak doubtfully of doubtful " things, and frankly confeſs their inca-" pacity concerning thoſe that are " above the reach of human under-" ſtanding. It is true, they think they " know much leſs than thoſe who pre-" tend to know all things: but, how-" ever, they are certain of thoſe things " which they do know, and the others " are ignorant even of thoſe very things " which they pretend to be perfectly " acquainted with." But, Mr. Thomas, if your alluſion extends no farther than to the philoſophers and divines who go under the denomination of diſſenters, your obſervation is very unfair and

and uncandid. There are ſome pretended divines, who (through ſecular intereſt) have crept within the pale of our eſtabliſhed Church, as entirely deſtitute of claſſical and divine knowledge, as any other pretended divines under the canopy of heaven.

S. The diſſenting miniſters inveigh much againſt the clergy for the great ſtreſs ſome of them lay upon the powers of reaſon to the prejudice of true religion and piety: they ſay we are taught to think too highly of ourſelves, and to diminiſh our dependence upon divine providence; and that the clergy are too avaricious, proud, and imperious, and give too much into the faſhions and cuſtoms of the world.

M. That great animoſity which has for ſo many years ſubſiſted between the contending parties, is in ſome meaſure diminiſhed; and I ſincerely hope a time

will come when it *ſhall* be totally eradicated. But I am ſorry I have it in my power to ſay, that ſome of the clergy are as forward in their cenſorious remarks as any of the diſſenting miniſters. Such paſtors of Chriſt's flock would do well to recollect, that they themſelves are but men; and although they act under ſpecial authority, they may be all liable to err in matters of faith and conduct. I do not know any thing that has contributed more to the diſparagement of the chriſtian profeſſion, and to open a field of diſſention, than a poſitive mode of preaching, too much practiſed by the clergy and miniſters of every denomination. They frequently command the aſſent of their audience to what they judge to be right, and pretend to ſupport their authority from divine revelation. Had St. Paul purſued a ſimilar line of conduct, when

pleading

pleading in behalf of his miſſion before Felix and king Agrippa, I am of opinion the former would not have trembled, nor the latter have been induced to ſay, " almoſt thou perſuadeſt " me to be a chriſtian." Although I am an advocate for the free exerciſe of our reaſon in matters of religion, and for receiving or rejecting at pleaſure the doctrines we may hear from the pulpit, I by no means wiſh to be underſtood as maintaining the doctrine of ſelf righteouſneſs. Reaſon is one of the greateſt bleſſings divine providence has beſtowed upon his creatures; yet, notwithſtanding, the corruption of human nature is ſuch, as to require a conſtant ſupply of divine grace to enable us to walk worthy our chriſtian profeſſion. However parties may diſagree in other reſpects relative to the election of grace, whether the whole or only a part ſhall

be ſaved at the laſt day, and thoſe to have been decreed from all eternity, it matters not; I am for every one to judge for himſelf; but, at the ſame time, I would moſt earneſtly recommend a conſtant dependence upon divine providence to the ſerious attention of every individual, whether chriſtian, jew, or pagan. To you and me, Mr. Thomas, as well as to the reſt of our fellow chriſtians, God has been abundantly gracious, in calling us to the privilege of the goſpel through the merits of his Son, the Meſſiah, who condeſcended to ſuffer upon the croſs, the juſt for the unjuſt: it is therefore our part and duty to worſhip and adore him, and conſtantly to implore his divine aid and aſſiſtance; ſo that we may be enabled to perform his divine will, during our reſidence here below;

and,

and, after we have paſſed this life, we may be found fit partakers of a joyful reſurrection, and of the number of thoſe, to each of whom our Lord at his ſecond coming ſhall pronounce theſe words, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." εἴσελθε εἰς τὴν χαρὰν τοῦ κυρίου σου. Matth. ch. 25, v. 23. Whoever denies the divine diſpenſation of grace, runs counter to the dictates of reaſon; an attention to which, will enable him to form a proper idea of God's moral government of the world, and of his abſolute dependence upon divine providence; ſound reaſon dictates, the moment the Almighty withdraws his ſupport from us, that very moment we ceaſe to exiſt. We are all, I believe, too apt to give way at times to the prevalency of paſſion, and to ſuppoſe that reaſon is amply ſufficient to guide us in the right way. We frequently miſtake

miſtake her inſtructions, and launch into a labyrinth from which we find it no ſmall difficulty to extricate ourſelves. There are many things conſiderably above the reach of man's underſtanding, which divine revelation alone has explained to us. Where is the man who can clearly comprehend the divine omnipreſence; namely, that God is in all places at one and the ſame time, and yet that the ſpirit of the Almighty pervades the whole univerſe is what not only ſcripture has declared, but what is abſolutely eſſential to conſtitute a being of infinite perfection. "Whither ſhall I "go from thy ſpirit? or whither ſhall "I flee from thy preſence? if I aſcend "up into heaven, thou art there: if I "make my bed in hell, behold, thou "art there. If I take the wings of the "morning, and dwell in the uttermoſt "parts of the Sea; even there ſhall

"thy

" thy hand lead me, and thy right hand
" ſhall hold me. Pſl. 139. V. 7, 8, 9, 10.

אנה אלך מרוחך ואנה מפניך אברח׃ אם אסק
שמים שם אתה ואציעה שאול הנך׃ אשא כנפי
שחר אשכנה באחרות ים׃ גם שם ידך תנחני
ותאחזני ימינך׃

The operations of the holy ſpirit upon our minds, produce another myſtery, not to be accounted for by the aid of reaſon; but the analogy betwixt the blowing of the wind, and the communications of divine grace, is ſo beautifully expreſſed by our Lord, that I ſhall quote his own words, as a ſufficient proof in favor of my argument. John Ch. 3. V. viii. " The wind bloweth
" where it liſteth, and thou heareſt the
" ſound thereof, but canſt not tell whence
" it cometh and whither it goeth: ſo is
" every one that is born of the ſpirit."

To

Τὸ πνεῦμα ὅπου θέλει πνεῖ, καὶ τὴν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ ἀκούεις, ἀλλ' οὐκ οἶδας πόθεν ἔρχεται, καὶ που ὑπάγει· οὕτως ἐστὶ πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος.

S. It would be a very happy circumſtance, if a plan could be ſtruck out for reconciling party prejudices, and preventing that animoſity which is ſo prevalent among men.

M. A plan, Mr. Thomas, might eaſily be effected, but the misfortune is, it would be apt to be too much neglected and not properly purſued. For inſtance, where men are of different principles of religion, let them learn to cultivate a ſpirit of forbearance and brotherly love towards each other. As our bleſſed Redeemer, while upon earth, went about conſtantly doing good, and adminiſtering comfort and relief indiſcriminately to all, ſo he likewiſe, when bleeding on the croſs, condeſcended to pray for his cruel

cruel and moſt inveterate enemies. Does this moſt incomparable example fail to operate forcibly upon the minds of men, and to raiſe in them the ſeeds of brotherly love and affection, let them pray to the all-wiſe Diſpoſer of events, that he may enable them to procure that moſt deſirable effect, a general love and unanimity.

S. From the conduct of thoſe who are led by curioſity to different places of divine worſhip, there is not much expectation of ſo deſirable a change. What they have frequently heard tranſpire from the pulpit on the Sunday, ſerves them for criticiſm the remainder of the week, in which they are generally more laviſhing of cenſure than praiſe.

M. There are too many who come under the deſcription you mention, whoſe conduct on various occaſions is highly reprehenſible. I have had *ocular* demonſtration,

demonſtration, both in church and meeting, of the behaviour of ſome during divine worſhip, whoſe impiety towards God, and ill manners to the clergyman or miniſter, has deſerved the greateſt cenſure: in caſe, Mr. Thomas, you ſhould hereafter be induced by curioſity to attend any other place of divine worſhip than that you have been brought up to, let me recommend to your ſerious attention, the ſtricteſt obſervance to decency and decorum. If any thing ſhould tranſpire oppoſite to your ſentiments or way of thinking, give it a fair trial, by examining it maturely, and then if you do not approve of it, reject it with a becoming modeſty.

S. Sir, I thank you for you ſalutary advice, which I ſhall not fail to make uſe of on any future occaſion; but I muſt beg your further aſſiſtance. It may

ſo

ſo happen that my opinion may be aſked relative to the doctrine I may hear; in ſuch a caſe, what would be the beſt plan to cement friendſhip, and prevent a religious controverſy with any of its votaries?

M. The beſt method I know of, (and which I have frequently practiſed to my advantage) is not to be haſty in your aſſertions, but rather reſerved in judgment. Deliver not your ſentiments imperiouſly; and, above all things, plead inability to the diſcuſſion of the ſubject. If any compliments are paid to your ſuperior education, receive them with indifference, and always accuſtom yourſelf to ſpeak with the greateſt diffidence and reſpect to thoſe who are your ſuperiors in years, whether poor or rich: by this line of conduct you will frequently induce the greateſt adverſaries to become your permanent friends, and

procure for yourſelf what is not common to many of your age, extenſive knowledge and experience.

S. As I am naturally of a lively diſpoſition, it will not be an eaſy taſk for me to put on that appearance of ſanctity which is abſolutely requiſite to keep upon good terms with very religious people. "By ſome indeed this "ſpecies of hypocriſy has been practiſed "with ſuch ſkill as to deceive ſuperficial "obſervers, though it can deceive even "theſe but for a ſhort time. Looks "which do not correſpond with the "heart, cannot be aſſumed without "labour, nor continued without pain; "the motive to relinquiſh them muſt "therefore ſoon preponderate, and both "the aſpect and covering of the ſtranger "muſt vaniſh together."

M. Mr. Thomas, religious ſincerity does not always conſiſt either in a ſmiling

or

or gloomy countenance, but varies as expreſſions of meekneſs and kindneſs vary with their objects. It is this religious charm which captivates without the aid of what is called a liberal education, and without which all the erudition in the world is ineffectual to happineſs. But it cannot be aſſumed as a maſk to conceal hypocriſy; it muſt be the genuine effect of the heart produced by divine grace; beſides, to make uſe of the obſervation of a very polite writer, and to ſubſtitute the word "complaiſance "for religious ſincerity, it renders a "ſuperior amiable, an equal agreeable, "and an inferior acceptable; it ſmooths "diſtinction, ſweetens converſation, and "renders every one agreeable and "pleaſing. It produces good-nature "and mutual benevolence, encourages "the timorous, ſooths the turbulent, "humanizes the fierce, and diſtinguiſhes

" a ſociety of civilized perſons from a " confuſion of ſavages. In a word, it is " a virtue that blends all orders of men " together in a friendly intercourſe of " words and actions, and is ſuited to " that equality in human nature which " every one ought to conſider, ſo far " as is conſiſtent with the order and " œconomy of the world. If we could " look into the ſecret anguiſh and " affliction of every man's heart, we " ſhould often find that more of it ariſes " from little imaginary diſtreſſes, ſuch " as checks, frowns, contradictions, " and expreſſions of contempt, than " from the more real pains and calami- " ties of life." The only method to remove theſe imaginary diſtreſſes as much as poſſible out of human life, would be the univerſal practice of ſuch an ingenuous complaiſance as has been here deſcribed, which, as it is a virtue,

may

may be defined to be a conſtant endeavour to pleaſe thoſe whom we converſe with, ſo far as we may do it innocently and free from hypocriſy. For a perſon to ſacrifice his own ſelf-love to other peoples', with a view of procuring peace and friendſhip, is a ſhort, but I believe, a true definition of Chriſtian love and affection.

S. If all, Sir, were to purſue that incomparable line of conduct you have pointed out, we ſhould have a real foretaſte of heaven upon earth, and I believe (to make uſe of your own expreſſions) we ſhould have but little occaſion for the inſtruction either of philoſophers or divines; they might then (as is the cuſtom in ſome countries) put their hands to the plough, and acquire a part of their bread by induſtry without the impoſition of tithes and extortion.

M. Mr. Thomas, you are rather too ſatyrical upon the clergy and miniſters of Chriſt's church, eſpecially as your father comes under the denomination of the former, and holds at this time livings to the amount of near two thouſand a year. You miſtake the intention of my plan; I do not mean that any one is to ſacrifice his private ſentiments either in religion or morality, but that politeneſs and good-breeding ſhould be cloſely attended to in the diſcuſſion of every ſubject. It is not poſſible for us all to be of one way of thinking in this ſtate of probation: Univerſal ſentiments can exiſt in a ſtate of perfection only, which ſtate lies on the other ſide the grave. In regard to your alluſion by tithes and extortion, I have only to obſerve if we have divine worſhip performed either in church or meeting, it is but reaſonable

a proper

a proper compenſation ſhould be made in proportion to the duty of every officiating clergyman or miniſter. There are ſome divines both of the church of England, and other denominations, whoſe learning and piety perhaps is not to be parallelled by the divines of any other country in Chriſtendom, and ſhall not ſuch men as theſe be liberally provided for; I anſwer, moſt aſſuredly. But in doing this, a proper diſcrimination ought to take place, for fear the prodigal ſons of Belial, or the Scribes and Phariſees of our day be falſely included in the number of Chriſt's faithful ambaſſadors.

S. Sir, I humbly beg your pardon for the haſtineſs of my expreſſion, it was a *lapſus linguæ*. I did not conſider the reſpect due either to my father or your uncle, who are in the number of divines, but as Horace ſays, " *Nemo mortalium*

" *omnibus*

" *omnibus horis ſapit.*" I readily agree with the author of the remarks on Mr. Rouſſeau's Emilius, " that there are in " ſo large a body of men, many whoſe " examples are uſeful expoſitions of " their precepts, and whoſe lives are " continual inſtructions to their pariſh- " ioners; and the effects of their exem- " plary behaviour are fully adequate to " the moſt ſanguine expectations. There " cannot be a more truly valuable " member of ſociety, or a more reſpect- " able character than that of a good " clergyman or miniſter; and ſuch a " man will never fail to meet with the " regard due to his conduct. On the " other hand, truth obliges me to ſay, " that too many of the clergy and " miniſters of every denomination " ſhamefully neglect the great duties of " their holy religion; and it is much to " be feared, from the bad examples

" theſe unworthy members of the church
" ſet before the eyes of their congrega-
" tions, that religion will in a ſhort time
" be conſidered even by the loweſt order
" of ſociety as a mere matter of form."

M. Mr. Thomas, you might have gone a little farther with the remarks on the ſame author, which, if I recollect right, contain theſe words: " It is per-
" haps of little importance to the com-
" munity at large, whether the national
" eſtabliſhment is Epiſcopal, Preſby-
" terian, or Independent; but it is
" highly neceſſary that it be reſtrained
" from perſecuting thoſe who diſſent
" from it, that its miniſters ſhould act in
" ſtrict conformity to their profeſſion,
" and that the great and important truſt
" of inſtructing the people in their
" religious duties ſhould be by no
" means made a matter of traffic, but

" confided

" confided to worthy and conſcientious " men."

S. Sir, by your permiſſion we will change the ſubject, and return to ſome literary obſervations of my old friend Mr. Sharp relative to the Deity and his attributes.

M. With all my heart, Mr. Thomas, but in relating particulars take care to diveſt yourſelf of prejudice, and be accurate in your account.

S. After three hours diſcourſe the other evening upon various ſubjects, we took a curſory view of an inſtrument he had then in his poſſeſſion, called the firſt mover. Mr. Thomas, ſaid he, this inſtrument occupies the major part of my attention, the ſtudy of which has procured me no ſmall degree of information. Matter, ſaid he, inert in itſelf, cannot move without ſome external force impreſſed upon it, and yet it is maintained

maintained by philoſophers, that matter put in motion when in *vacuo* would for ever proceed in a ſtrait line. I will not take upon me to ſay what kind of an anſwer I immediately made him, but it has been my determination to commit the deciſion of the ſubject to your ſuperior judgment.

M. I ſhall take upon me to ſay, that all forms and figures are dependent upon matter; that therefore, from the privation of its properties, the forms and figures neceſſarily ceaſe to be, and that matter cannot poſſibly exiſt without conſtant action and re-action (the conſtant exertion of the Deity being requiſite for its exiſtence). Was it otherwiſe, then from a body in motion, free of impediment, and proceeding in a ſtrait line continually, the eternity of matter would be eaſily maintained by naturaliſts; for whatever is allowed to proceed independently,

pendently, muſt have eternally proceeded, and therefore have eternally exiſted.

S. A body in motion, I preſume, muſt either be ſubject to the laws of gravitation and attraction, which the all-wiſe Ruler of the univerſe has aſſigned to the courſe and order of his providence, or it muſt continually proceed in a ſtrait line by the power of the Deity. The former is ſuppoſed poſſible by ſome almoſt independent of Deity's continual ſupport; but the latter is what no one can refute, although he may have preſumption enough to deny it.

M. I am clearly of opinion, that matter put in motion has no power to ſtop its progreſs, and that it would proceed in a ſtrait line (*ad infinitum*) unleſs prevented by ſome other cauſe; but whoever conſiders this ſubject metaphyſically, will find that philoſophers

phers have ſtopped ſhort in their reſearches after matter and its properties, and have given us but a mere glimpſe of information upon this point. We are in ſome meaſure led to underſtand, from what mathematicians call demonſtration, that this property of perpetual movement is contained in matter when all impediment is taken away; but, when philoſophically conſidered, it is proved to the contrary; for inſtance, when the firſt impreſſed laws of nature ceaſe, then matter aſſumes her (*vis inertiæ*) or power of inactivity, ſo that it has neither power to give motion to itſelf, or to prevent it when acted upon by ſuperior force. Should the laws of gravitation or attraction (a power or virtue which we know nothing of) together with the other properties of matter ceaſe, then all nature would haſten with as much precipitancy into an univerſal

nothing, as it did into exiſtence when firſt produced by the inconceivable energy of the firſt Author of exiſtence and motion. I might deduce a variety of proofs in favour of my argument; but as prolixity, on dry ſubjects, is in general found diſagreeable to moſt young people, I ſhall quote the following lines for your tranſlation, which I may venture to preſume you will find applicable to too many of this day:

" Sunt fortunæ qui caſibus omnia ponunt,
" Et nullo credunt mundum rectore moveri,
" Natura volvente vices et lucis, et anni,
" Atque ideo intrepidi quæcunque altaria tangunt."

S. I am extremely obliged to you, Sir, for your candid and generous way of delivering your ſentiments, and I ſincerely aſſure you, that your obſervations are ſo far from being diſagreeable

able to me, that I could wiſh you would be ſo obliging as to extend your remarks on the infinite diviſibility of matter, and its annihilation, both of which Mr. Sharp ſuppoſes poſſible.

Mr. Thomas, my information upon every ſubject, as far as my ſmall abilities will admit of, ſhall be always at your ſervice; you may command me upon all worthy occaſions. Common experience convinces us, that the mind of man, with cloſe application to external, as well as internal objects, is capable of great improvement, and if properly cultivated, always produces ſomething new to attract attention: matter, in like manner, is capable of various modifications and improvements, and the more it is tempered and modified, the greater its qualities appear. All thoſe various forms, which nature at different times aſſumes, are

the effects of motion; for if matter (as is proved from experiment) be a paſſive principle, ſome other cauſe muſt of courſe be aſſigned to all thoſe alterations and changes, which ſo frequently preſent themſelves to our view. The diviſibility of matter has given riſe to a variety of conjectures, and has been productive of much chimerical philoſophy. Nay, ſo vain have been the purſuits of ſome enthuſiaſtic philoſophers, that they have anxiouſly ſtudied the properties of matter, in order to lay a foundation for its eternity, and to ſubvert (if poſſible) the idea of a firſt cauſe. I would aſk one of thoſe curious philoſophers, how it comes about, that the celeſtial bodies perſevere in their reſpective motions, and conſtantly move in the ſame tracks, without making the leaſt deviation. The anſwer certainly muſt be one of theſe two ways, *viz.*

either

either by the force of ſome ſubtil fluid which keeps them in a circular motion, or by ſome retentive power which prevents them from projecting in ſtrait lines, when they have received their *momentum* from the hand of divine Providence. The Epicurean philoſophy ſuppoſes matter to have for ever been of itſelf, without any cauſe, and endeavours to make it independent of a firſt mover, and incapable of annihilation, which ſelf-exiſtence implies to render it infinite and eternal. I have already proved in my laſt obſervations, that motion is no more eſſential to matter than reſt; that matter of itſelf can never produce motion, and that it would for ever remain in the ſtate it is placed in, unleſs removed by ſome external cauſe. Now this being the caſe, it would have been a great advantage to the ſentiment of the Epicurean ſect, or in other

words, of our modern Atheiſts, could they have proved from whence this motion did at firſt originate, ſince their curious conjectures tend only to this, that there is nothing beſide inactive matter itſelf to produce it. Motion, as I have already obſerved, is by no means eſſential to matter; for whatever is eſſential to any thing, that thing cannot exiſt without it.

S. But ſome have aſſerted, that matter never was, or can, be at abſolute reſt; for, ſay they, motion is a quantity, and is as capable of diviſion as any other quantities, therefore a body may be moving any ſpace of time, and yet never ſenſibly change its poſition.

M. I ſhall not take upon me to controvert this idea for the preſent, but ſhall content myſelf with obſerving, that I by no means believe attraction to be eſſential to matter. On the contrary,

trary, it appears very probable to me, that gravity is a divine energy impreſſed on matter, and that motion is an active principle, which is continued by virtue of a firſt cauſe, and is not eſſential to bodies. The deſign of nature, which ſeems moſt conſonant to the wiſdom of the Deity, is, that he has conſtituted laws, agreeable to which, all bodies univerſally act upon one another, and produce thoſe viſible changes in the material ſyſtem, whilſt the Almighty, by his intimate preſence with every ſingle part of the univerſe, preſerves them in their various operations *.

Idcirco

* " Every particle of matter is actuated by the " Almighty Being, which paſſes through it. The " heavens and the earth, the ſtars and planets, " move and gravitate by virtue of this great " principle within them. All the dead parts of " nature are invigorated by the preſence of their " Creator, and made capable of exerting their " reſpective qualities." Sir ISAAC NEWTON.

Idcircò certis dimenſum partibus orbem
Per duodena regit mundi ſol aureus aſtra.
Quinque tenent cælum zonæ; quarum una coruſco
Semper ſole rubens, et torrida ſemper ab igni:
Quam circum extremæ dextrâ lævâque trahuntur,
Cæruleâ glacie concretæ, atque imbribus atris.
Has inter mediamque, duæ mortalibus ægris
Munere conceſſæ divûm; et via ſecta per ambas,
Obliquus quà ſe ſignorum verteret ordo.
Mundus ut ad ſcythiam ripheaſque arduus arces
Conſurgit; premitur libyæ devexus in auſtros.
Hic vertex nobis ſemper ſublimis; at illum
Sub pedibus ſtyx atra videt maneſque profundi.
Maximus hic flexu ſinuoſo elabitur anguis
Circum, perque duas in morem fluminis arctos:
Arctos oceani metuentes æquore tingi.
Illic, ut perhibent, aut intempeſta ſilet nox
Semper, et obtentâ denſantur nocte tenebræ;
Aut redit à nobis aurora, diemque reducit:
Noſque ubi primus equis oriens afflavit anhelis.
Illic ſera rubens accendit lumina veſper.

S. Sir, the prolixity of your Latin quotation is ſuch, that were we in a mixed company, I am of opinion we ſhould both be conſidered as pedants very

very anxious to perſuade them we were perſons of ſuperior learning; but be that as it may, I ſhall requeſt your indulgence of a little more information on this ſubject. You have endeavoured to ſhew that the attraction of bodies is not to be mechanically accounted for; and that the planets cannot poſſibly perform their reſpective revolutions without ſome *ſupernatural* cauſe: pray, what is the reaſon then that the laws of gravitation and attraction have by philoſophers long been aſſigned to the various operations of the univerſe *.

M. Who-

* "God, whoſe infinite wiſdom and power created "all things, animate and inanimate, has involved "the latent ſprings, by which he actuates them in "impenetrable obſcurity; and the keeneſt reſearches "of the wiſeſt of men into theſe ſecrets of the "univerſe, muſt terminate in the utter confuſion "of their pride, and the thorough conviction of "their limited capacities. *Latent iſta omnia craſſis*

"*occultata*

M. Whoever judiciouſly conſiders the paſſive principle of matter, muſt chearfully acquieſce with the opinion of Sir Iſaac Newton, that gravitation is by no means eſſential to nature; that it is a virtue impreſſed on matter by the Author of the univerſe, and may properly be called the ſecondary cauſe of the celeſtial motions. There is a very great difficulty which ſome ingenious men have been perplexed with relative to this quality of attraction in matter; namely, how it can poſſibly act at a diſtance without any medium to convey the action. I would obſerve, that there is a difficulty of a ſimilar nature equally as great and myſterious; thinking, remembering, ſenſation, and reflection, are properties of the mind not eaſily to be

" *occultata et circumfuſa tenebris; ut nulla acies*
" *humani ingenii tanta ſit, quæ penetrare in cælum,*
" *terram intrare poſſit.*"

be accounted for; and yet we muſt of courſe admit them both in theory and practice. The communication of motion from one part of the univerſe to the other; and even the firſt production of matter and motion, or a ſomething produced, are not to be accounted for; and yet that ſuch things really exiſt, is beyond a poſſibility of doubt. When we are competent to explain how our ſouls and bodies mutually act upon each other, then we may probably judge how matter, without any medium, acts at a diſtance; till then, we muſt reſt ourſelves contented with this knowledge, that ſuch a quality is actually concomitant with matter, and is in reality the cauſe of all thoſe uniform appearances of the world. No perſon of real ſenſibility will attempt to explain by rules of mechaniſm, how this ſyſtem was originally produced, or how the

the faculties of material organs are ſupported and kept in order, whence they originated, and what way they perpetually communicate to each other their reſpective actions and influences: let it ſuffice every rational man, from the common appearances of things, to inveſtigate the powers and properties of nature, and from them to account for future obſervations. If we admit of a Deity infinitely wiſe and powerful to have created this world out of nothing, there will be no great difficulty in allowing him to have impreſſed ſome extraordinary virtue upon matter moſt conſonant to the will and deſign of his providence; but if we object to ſuch a power, much greater and more aſtoniſhing difficulties in the mechanical explanation of the creation muſt be ſurmounted.

S. Some

S. Some philoſophers maintain, that nothing exiſts of itſelf beſides matter and empty ſpace; becauſe whatever exiſts is poſſeſſed of ſome quantity either great or ſmall. Now, whatever is tangible, and prevents motion, muſt of courſe be ſubſtance; on the contrary, if it does not impede motion, it muſt be ſpace: But Plenum and Vacuum have given *riſe* to many unneceſſary diſputes; and, although the advocates of each have ſtrenuouſly ſupported their arguments as founded upon true principles of natural philoſophy, they have not as yet been able to lay down any general rule by which an abſolute deciſion may be formed.

M. I believe, Mr. Thomas, it will require very convincing arguments to perſuade a ſenſible man that any bodies whatever are perfectly ſolid, ſince it is clear, to a demonſtration, that gold,

braſs, and all the other ſubſtances which are thought to be moſt ſolid are porous and pervious to other bodies. It would be as eaſy for a man to define what Deity himſelf is as to aſcertain a Plenum or Vacuum. The incomparable Sir Iſaac Newton has committed them to the inveſtigation of future ages, therefore as ſuch a man has left the ſubject undetermined, it behoves every one to be very circumſpect in his concluſion.

It is not eaſy to conceive how the planets can perform their reſpective revolutions in a Plenum; on the contrary, it is found from experiment, that the fineſt matter is capable of preventing any two bodies from entering into contact, therefore a plenitude will not admit of motion

S. I believe, Sir, it is for want of comprehenſion that I cannot take in your arguments to any degree of ſatisfaction,

ſatisfaction, and you will be ſo obliging as to excuſe me when I aſſert that they appear to me to be abſurd and ridiculous. You lay it down as a maxim that it would be as eaſy for a perſon to define what God is, as to determine either a Plenum or Vacuum, and that Sir Iſaac Newton has not given his abſolute opinion relative thereto; but in your concluſion I am led to believe that from a Plenum not being capable of admitting of motion, there muſt of courſe be a Vacuum in nature. However feaſible ſuch philoſophical doctrines may appear to you, or any other gentleman, I for one will not ſacrifice my judgment by embracing your new tenets of philoſophy. I am not at all ſurprized to find ſo many naturaliſts who deny the creation of matter, and who admit of its eternal exiſtence, ſince you who profeſs Chriſtianity are ſo wavering in

your ſentiments, You have even gone ſo far as to ſay that the incomparable Sir Iſaac Newton (an aſſertion entirely new to me) has not maintained a Vacuum in his natural philoſophy: If his doctrine of the laws of motion doth not tend to prove it, pray, in the name of common ſenſe, what does it tend to prove? If there is not a Plenum in nature, a Vacuum muſt follow; and yet you ſay it is impoſſible to maintain either one or the other. You might as well have taken upon you to prove that entity and nonentity are one and the ſame thing. That there is not a Plenum in nature I will readily admit, as well as the propriety of the arguments you have made uſe of to prove it; but does it not follow from thence, if the idea of a Plenum is diſproved, a Vacuum muſt of courſe ariſe. You have frequently told me I am but a youth,

youth, and that I have not arrived at a ſufficient age to form a right judgment of things, therefore, if you wiſh me to become a convert to your philoſophy, you muſt not deliver your ſentiments with ſo much ambiguity.

M. Mr. Thomas, I have frequently mentioned your years and inexperience, as well as your haſtineſs of expreſſion, which was never more conſpicuous than on the preſent occaſion. Your warmth of temper frequently carries you beyond due bounds, and leads you into a path, which, if purſued, will moſt certainly terminate in diſgrace. I have made uſe of no arguments by which you can form an abſolute concluſion of my ſentiments relative to a Vacuum; but, as I have pointed out the impoſſibility of a Plenum being conſonant to the laws of gravitation and attraction, it may not be thought

unneceſſary, for your information, to contraſt the matter, by examining the principles on which a Vacuum depends, and to ſee how far they will bear a proper inveſtigation. The experiment of the air pump is found to prove nothing in favour of a complete vacuum, for after the moſt accurate exhauſtion, there is always found to be air enough remaining to ſupport the exiſtence of ſome kinds of inſects. I know it will be contended by ſome gentlemen who are great advocates for experimental philoſophy, that a diminution of air is effected by an experiment upon the air pump; for, ſay they, we can ſo exhauſt the pump as to deprive a variety of animals and inſects of their exiſtence. I anſwer, that (although I am not an advocate for a Plenum) ſuch experiments may poſſibly prove, not a diminution of *matter in toto*, but a rarefaction

of

of the *air* only, for while the groſſer particles ſeparate, and make their way out of the pump, during the exhauſtion, a very ſubtil fluid may poſſibly pervade all the internal parts of the pump, ſo as not to leave the minuteſt part of a vacuum. It is allowed by the firſt philoſophers in the world, that matter is capable of infinite diviſibility; that the ſmalleſt grain of ſand contains as many parts as there are particles of ſand in the whole univerſe, and ten hundred million times as many in addition, even to number *ad infinitum:* For this very reaſon, I ſuppoſe, becauſe we are not competent to form an idea of a whole, but there muſt be an half. Now, let us ſuppoſe for a moment, that the Deity, whoſe power is infinite, was to cauſe a ſeparation of parts, and their reſpective diviſions of univerſal nature to take place; in ſuch a caſe, Mr. Thomas, ſuppoſing

ſuppoſing you had the capability of an angel to pervade the univerſe, what kind of an idea would you be able to form of a Vacuum or Plenum? Would not you be ready to cry out in the words of a very great philoſopher, "that the more we enquire into the "objects of natural philoſophy, the "more we diſcover our ignorance. I "have philoſophized for a long time, "and thought I had arrived to a "certainty in many things; but, alas! "I begin now to doubt thereof, and, "what is worſe, there are ſome things "of which I can no longer doubt, "deſpairing of ever being able to find "them out. There have been ſome "great genius's amongſt the illuſtrious "men of all ages and nations, who, "having as much ſincerity as penetra-"tion and judgment, have frankly

"owned

" owned this incertitude, which the
" vanity of other philoſophers would
" not let them acknowledge."

S. Let us ſuppoſe, as ſome philoſophers do, " that God places a man at the
" extremity of corporeal bodies (which
" we cannot deny but that he has
" power to do, if we do not ſuppoſe
" body to be infinite, which we cannot
" do without annihilating the Deity,
" becauſe otherwiſe there would be
" many infinities) and then ſuppoſe
" that this man ſtretches forth his arm:
" if he can do it, he will put it into a
" place where there is ſpace without
" body; and if he cannot do it, he
" muſt be hindered by ſomething
" which is beyond the boundaries of
" this world, and ſpace which we can
" neither underſtand nor expreſs. There
" muſt therefore be immenſe ſpaces
" void of all bodies, and capable of
" receiving

" receiving thoſe which God may be
" pleaſed to create anew. For, if
" corporeal ſubſtance filled all imagi-
" nable places, or rather ſpace itſelf,
" then it muſt be infinite in its exten-
" ſion :" therefore it would be impoſ-
ſible for the Deity, who made the world out of nothing, to create one ſingle atom more.

M. Mr. Thomas, you generally ſtop ſhort in your quotations; but if you had proceeded a little farther you would have informed me what Des Cartes has advanced upon this ſubject. " If the Deity," ſaid he, " ſhould take
" away all the matter that is in a veſſel,
" and not permit any other body to
" enter therein, the ſides of the veſſel
" would immediately become cloſe,
" and touch each other; becauſe it
" would imply a contradiction to ſay,
" that two bodies are ſeparate; *i. e.*
" that

" that there is a diſtance between one " and the other, and yet that this " diſtance was nothing; for diſtance is " a property of extenſion, which can- " not ſubſiſt without ſomething be " extended." In another place he ſays, " Matter does not conſiſt in a thing " that is either hard or heavy, or of any " particular colour, or that affects the " ſenſes any other way; but only in " that it is a ſubſtance extended in " length, breadth, and thickneſs." We are thus led to believe according to this philoſopher, that where-ever there is extenſion, there muſt be matter. Now, it is evident, if extenſion be the eſſence of bodies, that there can be no Vacuum at all, ſeeing where-ever there is extenſion there will be matter. But if, on the contrary, impenetrability and hardneſs, as ſome philoſophers ſuppoſe, form the eſſence of

of bodies, it is very eaſy to conceive how there may be a Vacuum. Mr. Thomas, I have now given you my opinion without the leaſt mental reſervation relative to a Plenum and Vacuum, and although the former appears to me more probable than the latter, I would not have you to ſuppoſe that I am more particularly attached to the one than the other; for probability is by no means tantamount either to demonſtration or evidence.

S. Sir, I am very much obliged to you for your explanation. I ſhall not heſitate a moment to acknowledge my conviction to the truth of your argument, and that I am now perfectly convinced of the difficulty to prove abſolutely either a Vacuum or Plenum; but there is no ſubject on which the ingenuity of man has been more exerted than to account for the exiſtence of this

this viſible world. Is it eternal? or was it created? is a queſtion that has engaged the attention of the inquiſitive, and confounded the philoſophers of every age. It is involved in difficulties to which no human abilities are equal, and which, by the mere inveſtigations of reaſon, can never be ſolved by any. I am ſo highly delighted with the ſubject, that I ſhall requeſt it as a particular favour that you will be ſo obliging as to expatiate a little upon the creation; for I begin to promiſe myſelf much information upon the ſubject from your judicious remarks.

M. Mr. Thomas, I have ſome remarks in manuſcript by me very applicable to the purpoſe; let us go into my ſtudy. Oh, there it is ready at hand! You have my permiſſion to ſit down, Mr. Thomas: there is a chair by the ſide of the book-caſe. Pleaſe to ſtir the

fire, that we may keep ourſelves warm this cold weather. Who is there?

S. It is my father, Sir, I can hear by his voice.

M. Well, John, give my compliments to the Rev. Doctor Thomas, and tell him I am engaged with his ſon in the diſcuſſion of a very important ſubject, and that he muſt wait the concluſion. Deſire him to walk into the parlour, and fetch a bottle of red port, John, for I know the Doctor is fond of a glaſs after dinner. Now for the ſubject of creation, Mr. Thomas. Shut the door, John. To eſtabliſh whatever be advanced concerning the eternity of the world, or its creation, requires that the contrary be proved impoſſible: For, as the power to create cannot be *philoſophically concluded* by aſcribing omnipotence to the Deity, becauſe to prove his omnipotence requires

quires that he be firſt proved able to create; ſo neither can it be *philoſophically denied*, unleſs it be firſt proved that he does not poſſeſs that power. It is therefore incumbent on thoſe who would eſtabliſh the eternity of the world, to prove that creation exceeds the power of God (for nothing to the purpoſe can be concluded from the antiquity of the world); for if God can create matter, then the world may, nay muſt have been created, however ancient it may be, ſince the idea of whatever is creatable, neceſſarily excludes that of eſſential or eternal exiſtence: So, on the other hand, thoſe who by the mere inveſtigations of reaſon, would confirm the creation of the world, are behoved to prove that it could not have been eternal; for if it could, then it may, nay muſt have been eternal, as the idea of whatever is eternal neceſſa-

rily excludes that of a derived and dependent exiſtence. That philoſophers therefore ſhould have written ſo unſatisfactorily on a queſtion of ſuch infinite difficulty, is no matter of ſurprize; for it cannot be ſatisfactorily anſwered but by divine revelation; on the authority of *that* alone are we able to determine that the world was created, and with that authority we ought to be ſatisfied. The account which Moſes gives of the creation, though ſhort, is however more rational and intelligible than that of any other writer on the ſame ſubject; and as it has received the ſanction of the divine teſtimony, we ought to remain ſatisfied as to its truth. It is undoubtedly attended with difficulties, but ſuch only as neceſſarily ariſe from the nature of the ſubject, and the limited capacity of the human intellect. It informs us that the world

was

was created, but it informs us not how; for that would have been needleſs, as we cannot comprehend the energy of an infinite being. "In the beginning God "created the heavens and the earth." Here is a fact aſſerted, in the belief of which our faith is reaſonable: the authority on which it is founded is unanſwerable, if allowed, and the doctrine itſelf involves no contradiction; for though it be incomprehenſible how the world could have been created out of nothing, yet it is a more probable opinion that it was ſo created, than that it was eternal; for the idea of dependence and mutability cannot be aſſociated with that of ſelf-exiſtence*: yet all

 matter

* Becauſe one mode of exiſtence is neceſſary to whatever is ſelf-exiſtent, viz. the mode in which it is ſelf-exiſtent: Nor can this mode be altered; for to alter the mode of exiſtence in a ſelf-exiſtent being,

matter ſeems dependent, ſubject to controul and change, and to various modifications in the form of its exiſtence. Therefore, though it be eaſy to ſay that the world is eternal, yet it is impoſſible upon that hypotheſis, to account for the apparent nature of matter. It is not, then, repugnant to reaſon, to acknowledge that the world was created. It is not more difficult to conceive how matter

being, muſt conſiſt either in increaſing or diminiſhing, either in energy or number, its properties or powers. But to diminiſh is to annihilate ſo far as is diminiſhed; and to increaſe is to create ſo far as is increaſed. But as the exiſtence of whatever is created depends on the will of another, and therefore may be annihilated; ſo the exiſtence of whatever is ſubject to annihilation, muſt depend on the will of another, and therefore it cannot be ſelf-exiſtent or eternal. Hence the mode of exiſtence in an internal Being (of whatever nature, ſpirit, or matter) its properties and powers muſt remain unalterably the ſame.

matter ſhould be created, than it is how ſpirit ſhould; and yet the latter we muſt allow. We muſt allow that our own ſouls are not ſelf-exiſtent; and the power that can create the one, ſeems not inferior to the creation of the other. If it be objected that the ſoul may be material, and ſo there needs no creation to account for its exiſtence, for that thoſe faculties, (as ſenſibility, reminiſcence, thought, perception, volition, conſciouſneſs of exiſtence, &c.) which we attribute to the ſoul, may be communicated to matter. I anſwer, that this is an impoſſibility, as it implies a contradiction, unleſs the creation of matter be allowed; for if matter be eternal, and inſenſible, &c. in its nature, then inſenſibility, &c. is eſſential to it. Therefore to render it ſenſible, &c. would be to deprive it of its eſſential and independent properties, which is abſurd;

ſurd; ſo that either the ſoul is not material, or elſe it *muſt* have been created. And ſo it muſt if it be immaterial; for, ſince it is conſcious of its exiſtence, if it were external it would be conſcious of eternal and independent exiſtence. But it is conſcious that it has *not* long exiſted, does not ſelf-exiſt, and cannot preſerve its faculties at pleaſure. Therefore its exiſtence is dependent, conſequently it was created. Now it is not more difficult to conceive the creation of an active ſubſtance poſſeſſed of reminiſcence, thought, perception, both intelligential and ſenſible volition, &c. than to conceive the creation of an inert ſubſtance that is extended, impenetrable, and moveable.

The properties attributed to the ſoul cannot be eſſential to matter; for (1.) if they were, then all matter would be conſcious of it, and there could be no

diſpute

diſpute about it with us who poſſeſs material bodies. And as every ſeparate particle of matter would then poſſeſs thoſe properties, ſo a man would have as many ſouls as there are material particles in his body, all which is contrary to experience. (2.) They would always remain in the ſame degree and vigour; for that which is eſſential to the exiſtence of any thing, neither admits increaſe nor diminution. (3.) Neither can they ariſe from the mechaniſm of the body, ſince no diſpoſition of the parts can communicate to the whole what neither of them ſeparately poſſeſs. They cannot be in the mechaniſm itſelf, for that is not a being; nor can they be produced in the body by mechanical ſtructure, for if that were poſſible, then one particle of matter would, by its operation on another, either communicate or excite

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ſurd; ſo that either the ſoul is not material, or elſe it *muſt* have been created. And ſo it muſt if it be immaterial; for, ſince it is conſcious of its exiſtence, if it were external it would be conſcious of eternal and independent exiſtence. But it is conſcious that it has *not* long exiſted, does not ſelf-exiſt, and cannot preſerve its faculties at pleaſure. Therefore its exiſtence is dependent, conſequently it was created. Now it is not more difficult to conceive the creation of an active ſubſtance poſſeſſed of reminiſcence, thought, perception, both intelligential and ſenſible volition, &c. than to conceive the creation of an inert ſubſtance that is extended, impenetrable, and moveable.

The properties attributed to the ſoul cannot be eſſential to matter; for (1.) if they were, then all matter would be conſcious of it, and there could be no

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what

what neither of them poſſeſſed, which is abſurd. Therefore thoſe properties which we attribute to the ſoul do not neceſſarily belong to matter, conſequently the ſoul is not material. If it be ſaid the Deity may communicate thoſe properties to matter; I anſwer he cannot, unleſs matter be created. We know nothing of either matter or ſpirit, but by their properties; and therefore cannot conceive of the exiſtence of any thing but as a combination of properties, which properties combined together, we call by one name (as the union of extenſion, impenetrability, and mobility, we call matter) and ſuppoſing there muſt be a ſubſtratum in which theſe properties inhere, we ſay that is the name of the ſubſtratum; and then again ſay, thoſe are the properties of the ſubſtratum which is philoſophiſing

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in a circle. We are altogether ignorant of any ſubſtratum; and if a ſubſtratum be neceſſary for properties to inhere in, then every ſubſtratum muſt neceſſarily have ſuch and ſuch properties, and can have no other, ſince, if it can receive a new property, that property muſt exiſt previouſly to its being communicated to it. But it is ſuppoſed that a ſubſtratum is neceſſary for the exiſtence of a property. Therefore every property muſt be co-eval with, or begin to exiſt at the ſame time as its ſubſtratum. Conſequently no new property can be added to any ſubſtratum. The communicating therefore of freſh properties to any thing implies an act of creation; ſince if no ſubſtratum be neceſſary for the exiſtence of properties, then the creation of them is the whole of creation. And if a ſubſtratum be neceſſary

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for them, then no new property can be created without the creation of a new ſubſtratum.

It may indeed be ſaid, that there are ſeparable and inſeparable, eſſential and non-eſſential properties: But this is ſooner ſaid than proved. The union of thoſe properties which enter into the idea of any thing are eſſential to it, and to increaſe or diminiſh them, forms a new compound idea, and it is not the idea of the ſame thing, *i. e.* it is not the idea of the ſame properties united. For example, if to the idea of extenſion I add thoſe of immobility and penetrability, I have what I call the idea of ſpace. Space, therefore, according to my idea of it, conſiſts of the union of theſe properties: (But where is its ſubſtratum?) If to the idea of extenſion I add thoſe of impenetrability and mobility,

mobility, I have a different compound idea, and call it the idea of matter; therefore matter, according to my ideas, conſiſts of the union of thoſe properties. It may be ſaid, that neither mobility nor immobility, penetrability nor impenetrability, are neceſſary to extenſion, but may be added to it; and yet extenſion will remain the ſame. True; you may add the idea of one property to that of another; but the compound idea thence ariſing will not be the ſame; for though the ſimple idea of each diſtinct property continues the ſame, yet the compound idea ariſing from the whole is different, therefore the thing itſelf which anſwers to that compound idea (or the ſubſtratum in which the properties inhere, if a ſubſtratum be neceſſary) is different. Every property and faculty, therefore is eſſential to and is inſeparable from that

which has them; for to ſuppoſe theſe properties to inhere in a ſubſtratum, and that ſome of them might be taken away, and others added to it, and yet the ſubſtratum itſelf to remain the ſame, is to ſuppoſe a change without any alteration.

If we add the idea of ſenſibility to that of matter, *i. e.* to that which is extended, impenetrable, and moveable, we have a new compound idea. But can we ſuppoſe that the ſubſtratum of thoſe three properties only, can be the ſubſtratum of ſenſibility? We may as well ſuppoſe that a compound idea in which ſenſibility is *not* included, is the ſame as that in which it is included; for every ſubſtratum muſt always have the ſame properties, otherwiſe it might be a ſubſtratum without having any properties; *i. e.* it might be that in which properties exiſt without any properties exiſting

exiſting in it, which is abſurd. And therefore, though the ideas of extenſion, impenetrability, mobility, and ſenſibility, may be compounded together, yet the ſubſtratum in which thoſe properties could co-exiſt, would not be the ſame as that in which a part only of them could exiſt.

But as an objection to this may be urged, that the faculties of the ſoul may be ſuſpended (as of reminiſcence, thought, perception, which happens often during ſleep) and yet the ſubſtance of the ſoul remains the ſame; and therefore thoſe faculties may be wholly taken away, and *vice verſa* other faculties might be added to it, and yet the ſubſtance of the ſoul would ſtill remain the ſame, ſo that the ſame ſubſtances may both receive new and loſe old faculties. To which I anſwer, that one of the properties of

the ſoul ſeems to be a ſort of indifference to the exertion of its active faculties, *i. e.* it is either capable of either motion or reſt, as matter is, only with this difference, that the former has a principle or faculty of motion in itſelf, the latter has not; *i. e.* it has always the power of thinking, &c. though it does not always think, as matter is always moveable, though it be not always moved. (2.) That this ſuſpenſion of its faculties, and the conſequent poſſibility of their annihilation, is a proof that the ſoul is not ſelf-exiſtent, for if it were, neither it nor any of its faculties or properties could be annihilated, ſince the properties or faculties of whatever is ſelf-exiſtent muſt be eternal and unalterable. But as the ſoul exiſts by the ſupport of another, therefore the motion or exertion of any of its active faculties may be

be either ſuſpended, or altogether ſtopped, by that Being by whoſe energy they exiſt, as matter may be fixed at reſt, or ſet in motion; *i. e.* its indifference to an exertion, and non-exertion of its faculties may be taken away, and that either *pro tempore* or continually. But when an alteration takes place, during which the ſoul is not the ſame without this faculty of indifference (if I may uſe that term) as it was with it. The Creator has altered it, his power exerted in the exiſtence of the ſoul is differently exerted, and therefore the ſubſtratum (in which the remaining properties and faculties of the ſoul inhere) which is the effect of his energy, is alſo different; the increaſe, ſuſpenſion, and total loſs of any of the faculties of the ſoul, and therefore a proof that the ſoul is created, and

owes its exiſtence to the conſtant ſupport of the Deity.

Attributing therefore the creation of the world to the Father of ſpirits, is more reaſonable than aſſerting its eternal exiſtence, as it does not ſeem to imply a greater power than what we have an example of, and is but acknowledging a ſupreme Governor of the univerſe, which there could not be if matter were ſelf-exiſtent, *i. e.* independent. To believe then that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth is not only ſcriptural but reaſonable. Here it may not be improper to obſerve, that the narrative manner in which Moſes records the creation is moſt proper. He pretends not to lay down and explain any philoſophical hypotheſis, which, as to the act of creation, would have been needleſs, ſince the human intellect cannot

cannot comprehend the creating energy of omnipotence; and which, with regard to the ſyſtem of the world and the laws of nature, would have been beneath the dignity of revelation. All he does, is to declare the creation of matter by the one only intelligent and firſt cauſe of all things, the Eternal JEHOVAH; and that the harmonious manner in which the whole is diſpoſed, aroſe not from the fortuitous concuſſion of atoms, but from the ordaining word of the Creator. The *how* and the *why*, queſtions of mere curioſity, he hath left to be diſcuſſed by thoſe who are more fond to inveſtigate what is abſtruſe than to learn what is profitable; but what is uſeful for us to know, viz. that there is a firſt cauſe and diſpoſer of all things, he hath related, and in ſuch a manner as to leave a forcible impreſſion on the mind, of the

the majeſty, wiſdom, and goodneſs, of the Almighty; not by the beauty of language; not by poetical deſcriptions; but by the ſublimity of his ſentiments ſo ſimply expreſſed, that the attention is not once diverted from the idea he conveys.

Perhaps in this he may differ from all impoſtors. Mahomet pretended, that in the elegance of his diction he exhibited a ſtanding miracle to all ſucceeding generations throughout the world, that he was divinely inſpired. But ſuch a miracle, which could neither be diſtinguiſhed from the efforts of genius, nor perceived to be great and extraordinary by any but thoſe who were critics in the language in which he wrote, could not be addreſſed to mankind at large, and therefore was ill adapted as a proof of his miſſion. If any thing of this kind could prove inſpiration

ſpiration, it muſt be the grandeur of the ſentiment, (and not the loftineſs of the expreſſion) which being the ſame in all languages, is always equally evident. If in deſcribing the works of omnipotence, one ſort of diction be preferable to any other, it is that which Moſes has employed, the ſimplicity of which ſeems well adapted to expreſs the facility with which the Almighty creates, יהי אור ויהי אור "Let there be light, and there was light." The order which Moſes has followed in his account of the creation and formation of the world, is that in which it happened. Firſt, he relates the creation of all the matter in the univerſe; "in the beginning God "created the heavens and earth;" and then immediately proceeds to what more directly concerns us, viz. the ſtate of the earth, which was without form and void, *i. e.* neither diſpoſed in order

nor

nor producing any thing either vegetable or animal; "and *darkneſs was upon* "*the face of the deep.*" How long it continued in this ſtate would be fruitleſs to enquire, and is not neceſſary to be known. "The ſpirit of God moved "upon the face of the waters," *i. e.* acted upon the maſs to bring it to maturity. It is an expreſſion taken from the incubation of fowls, and ſignifies the agency of the Deity in bringing the world to perfection; the firſt effect of which (agency) was the production of light, which being deſigned for the upper regions, was firſt brought forth and though not yet conglobed, ſerved to warm and illumine the earth, and divide the day from the night; "and the "evening and the morning were the firſt "day" on the ſecond day God produced the atmoſphere called firmament or expanſe to divide the Water on the earth from

from that which conſtitutes the clouds in the Air. On the third day the Waters which had hitherto covered the whole face of the globe, were drained off into channels excavated to receive them; and the earth became compact and firm, fit to produce graſs, herbs, plants, and trees, which were then created. On the fourth day the light was formed into one ſolid globe of fire, and the moon was made at the ſame time; and each being placed at the proper diſtance from the earth, became two great lights to it, the ſun, the greater light, ſhining with its own luſtre to rule the day, the moon the leſſer light, lucid by reflexion to rule the night. "*God* "*made the ſtars alſo.*" whether he made them at this time or before is not mentioned: we are only informed that he made them. At the ſame time, when the ſun and moon were made, it is moſt probable

probable the other planets were, and thoſe motions impreſſed upon them by which they revolve round their centres and axes. To theſe motions of the earth we owe the grateful viciſſitudes of ſummer and winter, day and night. Theſe luminaries ſerve us for ſigns and for ſeaſons, and for days and for years: and now the world being rendered fit for the habitation of living creatures, God on the fifth day created the fiſh of the ſea and the fowls of the Air, and bleſſed them with that fecundity, which is peculiar to all oviparous animals. On the ſixth day he commanded the earth to bring forth the living creature after his kind, and cat le after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind; and God ſaid that it was good.

Now the earth being diſpoſed in the moſt convenient order, diverſified with every

every ſcene that charms the ſight, mountain and valley, hill and dale, covered with delightful herbage, watered with rivers, and ſtocked with living creatures; there ſeemed but one more wanting, who, inveſted with ſuperior powers, might preſide as Lord over the earth, by whom the beauty and harmony of the creation might be perceived and enjoyed, and the wiſe and provident deſign and diſpoſal of all the parts of the vaſt fabrick be properly underſtood; who might trace and admire, with a grateful heart, the infinite wiſdom, goodneſs, and power of the Almighty in all his works. God ſaid, "Let us make man in our image, "after our likeneſs, and let them have "dominion over the fiſh of the ſea, and "over the fowl of the air," &c. "And "God ſaw every thing that he had "made, and behold it was very good;

" and the evening and the morning " were the ſixth day." Thus the heavens and the earth were created, and all that therein is, finiſhed in ſix days; and man, formed after the image of his Maker, appointed to preſide over the whole. The expreſſion which Moſes has made uſe of, is remarkable and juſt. He does not ſay that man was made equal to him who is eternal, nor can any thing be ſhaped like him, who is an infinite Spirit, and without dimenſion. But the image and likeneſs of God, in which man was created, conſiſts in his ſuperiority over all the other creatures on earth. For as God is the ſupreme Being in the univerſe, ſo man is the ſuperior being in this viſible world, diſtinguiſhed by nobler faculties than other creatures in it, and exerciſing authority over them: Hence he is juſtly ſaid to be made in the image and after the

the likeneſs of God, having dominion over the fiſh of the ſea, and over the fowl of the air, &c. But whilſt the ſuperiority of man over other creatures is ſo honourably mentioned, his inferiority to God is plainly pointed out, ſince in his moſt perfect ſtate, and as he came from the hands of his Maker, when his abilities were unimpaired, and in their full vigour, he was then only a comparative image, a mere ſketch of the likeneſs of God. Thus you have heard the Moſaic account of the creation and origin of all things; an account which, though conciſe, is ſufficiently full and clear, and to which reaſon can find nothing to object, though Scepticiſm abſurdly affirms, that there are numerous objections againſt it. As firſt, If the world was created by Omnipotence, why were ſix days conſumed, when a moment would have

been ſufficient for the fiat of the Almighty to produce the whole compleatly finiſhed; yet, as it does not therefore follow, that he would do it in ſo ſhort a time, it is no argument to prove that account ſpurious; which aſſigns a longer time for the completion of it. As well might it be aſked why the food of a man is not inſtantaneouſly produced; and the power, if not the being of God be denied, becauſe of the gradual growth of the fruits of the earth. There may be reaſons, though we ſhould not be able to diſcover them, why the Almighty ſhould employ a longer time than a moment in creating and diſpoſing the work; and why he ſhould employ the preciſe time of ſix days. For ought we know he might chooſe to prolong the work of creation; that ſpiritual beings, might have an opportunity to admire his various operation and contemplation

plation on the execution and design of them in their different states. That six days should be employed, Moses himself, though not expressly, yet by implication, has assigned a reason; for on the seventh day the Sabbath was instituted in remembrance of the creation; and as the Sabbath was made for man, so that time was appointed for it, which being neither so seldom as to suffer its religious effects to wear off, nor so frequent as to interrupt his necessary business, would be most convenient to him, and those reasons assigned for observing it which would make the deepest impression on his mind. But those reasons could not have existed unless God had consumed six days in the creation, and on the seventh rested from all his work which he created and made. It is objected, that the history of Moses, which makes the world not quite six thousand years

old, is contradicted by others of much greater antiquity. But not to mention the absurdities related in these books, they contain internal evidences of their being spurious and forged in a much later date than they lay claim to (*a*). And the

(*a*) In the preface to the translation of the Gentoo laws, we are told, page 37, that the Gentoos divide the age of the world into four periods. That the

(1.) Called Suttee Jogue, or Age of Purity,	lasted Years 3,200,000.	The Life of Man 100,000.	his height 21 cubits.
(2.) Tirtali Jogue, when the third part of mankind were Corrupt,	2,400,000	10,000	
(3) Dwapaar Jogue, when half mankind were Corrupt,	1,600,000	1,000	
(4.) Collee Jogue, in which all mankind, are Corrupt has lasted	5,000		
is to last	400,000	100	

And in Page 39. we read thus. " When ten " Thousand and ten years of the Suttee Jogue " were past, on the night of the full moon in the " month Bhadum, I Munnoo, at the command of " Brehma,

the very arguments urged by thoſe who would

" Brehma, finiſhed this ſhaſter, that ſpeaks of men's " duty, of juſtice and of religion ever inſtructive." Now if the tranſlator would (as he ſeems inclined to do) refuſe the authenticity of the moſaic account of the creation from the ſhaſter, he muſt not only acknowledge the antiquity, but alſo the truth of the ſhaſter, for if the latter be denied, he will not be able to eſtabliſh the former. But if he admits the truth of the ſhaſter, he muſt then allow a revelation (which he ſeems unwilling to do) and likewiſe believe what requires a greater and more implicit faith, than the writings of Moſes. He ſeems to ſpeak of the antiquity of the ſhaſter, as a matter eſtabliſhed and a full refutation of the book of Geneſis. But it bears evident marks of being a modern forgery; for

1. How came ſuch a treatiſe to be requiſite in the Suttee Jogue, or age of purity? and if it were neceſſary, why was it not given at firſt, rather than 10,010 years after the world was created? (I ſay nothing of the abſurdity of ſome of the laws) either Munnoo was an impoſtor, or he was not. If he were not an impoſtor, then all the abſurdities he wrote muſt be acknowledged of divine authority; and the tranſlator of them muſt ſubſcribe to their truth.

would eſtabliſh their authenticity, are equally truth. If he were an impoſtor, then the Indians who received his work (or the work bearing his name) were eaſy to be impoſed upon, which, nevertheleſs the tranſlator thinks to be impoſſible.

2. Munnoo ſays that he wrote in the 10,010th. year of the Suttee Jogue: but how came this Jogue which was the firſt, to have any *diſtinguiſhing appellation*, or any appellation at all in ſo early a period of it? there can be no reaſon aſſigned why it ſhould have a particular name to diſtinguiſh it from others, before thoſe of others had taken place, and before it was known that there would be any other. This proves that the work is a forgery, written in after times by ſome other perſon, who ſubſcribed the name of Munnoo to it. Neither does it appear ſo difficult (much leſs impoſſible as the tranſlator imagines) to impoſe on an uninlightened people; eſpecially ſuch as are under the influence of their precepts (by whom alone the language of their ſcriptures is underſtood) as are gentoos, and to publiſh a forged catalogue of princes, whoſe reigns ſhould reach back to the moſt remote period; for ſuch a work, both from the authority of the publications, and from national vanity

equally applicable to prove the Moſaic chronology

vanity, which would be flattered in proportion to the antiquity aſcribed to their nations: would find an eaſy admittance and ready belief among ignorant Indians.

3. If the world were of greater antiquitiy than Moſes has aſſigned it, veſtiges of that antiquity muſt have remained in the Weſtern and Northern parts of the globe. But no annals in theſe parts reach ſo far back as Moſes' Hiſtory: and the ſtate of every country in Europe ſo far as they be traced by any Hiſtories and Monuments, proves that they were in their infancy ſince the time of the flood recorded by Moſes.

As to what the tranſlator ſays, (Page 38) the bramins aſſert, *viz.* "That the deluge really never took place in Hindoſtan" the anſwer is clear. For that there never has been a general deluge, but that their country has exiſted in its preſent ſtate, during the ſpace of 7,205,000 years is incredible: for either the reſt of the world muſt have been deſtroyed at the time Moſes aſſigns for the flood (which as it covered the higheſt mountains in Aſia: could not have happened without overflowing Hindoſtan alſo) or there would have remained in all

chronology to be true (*b*). Philoſophi-
cal

all other countries, evidences of a proportionable; if not an equal antiquity to that which the Gentoos claim. There muſt therefore have been a general deluge, which could not but involve Hindoſtan in the ſame calamity, as the reſt of the world; conſequently their aſſertion and chronology is falſe.

(*b*) In page 40, and 41. The tranſlator of the Gentoo laws, argues in this manner. "What "period ſhall we aſſign to theſe writers, if we "diſallow the authorities here quoted? if they are "falſe, there muſt have been a time when the "impoſition would have been too palpable to "have paſſed upon mankind; and when the con-"current teſtimony of the whole world would "have riſen up in judgment againſt it; for if we "grant Munnoo's works to have been publiſhed "during his own life time; it is impoſſible that he "ſhould have ventured to utter ſo monſtrous a "forgery; and if they were concealed till after "his death, could the memory of his late exiſtence "be ſo ſhortly obliterated through the whole "country? but ſuppoſing ſo much of the books "as relates to the date, to have been foiſted in by

"another

cal objections have likewiſe been made to

" another, and afterwards produced as a part of the
" original text, which till that time had lain undiſ-
" covered; nobody ſurely would have believed
" him in oppoſition to the univerſal faith! for ſo
" miraculous a fiction could never gain credit, but
" upon the ſupport of ſome principle of religious
" opinion, and every religion has eſtabliſhed a chro-
" nology of its own: beſides, can it be poſſible that
" none of Munnoo's cotemporaries, none of the ſuc-
" ceeding writers ſhould have recorded ſo ſtriking
" a circumſtance, for if the whole Indian world
" had till that time believed in a chronology anſwer-
" ing to that of Moſes, ſo aſtoniſhing a change in
" their ſentiments upon the introduction of the
" doctrine of the Jogues would have furniſhed
" ample matter for a thouſand volumes; but on the
" contrary, all the parts of every ſhaſter (however
" different from each other on religious ſub-
" jects) are yet uniform and conſiſtent throughout
" upon this: the ſame mode of computing their
" annals has always obtained, and the ſame belief
" of the remoteneſs or antiquity, that now prevails;
" has been acknowledged, even at the time which
" ſome pretend to fix the appearence of letters in Hindoſtan."

to prove the world of greater antiquity:

Hindoſtan." In the ſame manner we may argue concerning the promulgation of Moſes' book of Geneſis, or concerning the religious coſmogony of any other nation. But there is this difference, between the writings and authority of Moſes, and thoſe of any other religious coſmogoniſt and legiſlator, viz. that Moſes not only records the antiquity of the world and delivers laws as from God, but aſſerts that in confirmation of his miſſion, he preformed miracles, of which the people were competent judges. He alſo foretels future and diſtant events, as a proof to generations to come; that he was divinely inſpired. Part of theſe events have taken place according to the time he aſſigned them, and the reſt continue to do ſo. But if he were divinely inſpired, what he has written is all true. That the Hindoſtans can eaſily be impoſed upon, in the moſt monſtrous and abſurd things, by the Bramins; is evident from the doctrine they have received concerning their caſts, and therefore it could not be difficult to impoſe upon them, with reſpect to the antiquity of their nation.

quity (*c*): but as they are objections founded on conjectural hypotheſes, they are of no weight, and may be eaſily removed by other hypotheſes. No authentic hiſtory (that of Moſes excepted) reaches back to ſo remote a period as the flood: and every appearance of the ſtate of the earth ſeems to limit its antiquity to the date aſſigned it by Moſes. Nor can any argument be drawn from the acknowledged goodneſs of God to prove that the world ought and therefore muſt have been created ſooner.

(c) The conjectures of Brydone concerning the ſtrata of lava at Mount Ætna, to prove the great antiquity of the world, are of little force: for as he ſoon carries us back to a period before the flood, we may fairly preſume that the accumulation of earth on each ſtrata of lava might, in the antidiluvian ſtate of the world, have been much eaſier and in leſs time than at preſent, either from rain waſhing down looſe earth from the top of the mountain, a great part of which might have been carried away by the deluge, or from various other cauſes.

For if the world is deſigned by its Author to exiſt a determinate period of time, as an habitation for ſentient creatures, or if he ſhould chooſe it to exiſt for ever for the ſame purpoſe, his goodneſs is equally perſpicuous and equally great, whether its commencement be near to or remote from the preſent time. To us it can ſignify nothing whether the world has been created 5,000 or 500,000 years: neither could it have made any difference to the firſt man at what time he was created: *for* as *ſooner* and *later* are relative terms reſpecting events, but have no relation to eternity any more than *nigh* and *far off* have to *infinite* ſpace, and as the preſent is all that a creature can enjoy, it matters not when that preſent time is, nor when the world was created. If the goodneſs of the Deity to communicate life and happi-

neſs,

neſs, be ſaid to be impugned by the Moſaic Chronology, as having remained inactive an inconceivable time, the ſame may with equal propriety be ſaid of any other Chronology of the world, though it extend to millions of ages paſt. But on neither ſuppoſition can his goodneſs be juſtly arraigned, for as there is no local ſituation to which the Deity is confined, but he is intimately preſent throughout the immenſity of ſpace, ſo there is no paſt and future to him but they form one eternal *preſent*. No juſt argument therefore can be adduced againſt the truth of Moſes' account of the creation from the late date he has aſſigned to it, ſince that time muſt have been as proper as any other could be. How great muſt *his* power be who gave exiſtence to the heavens and the earth, *who ſpake and it was done, who commanded and it ſtood faſt.*

Were the power which all the creatures in the Univerſe poſſeſs, united together, vaſt as it muſt be, yet it would afford but a faint idea of *his* power, which is infinite. Nay the power of every creature is but an efflux from his, for as from him all being, ſo all power is derived. He made and ſupports and acts in every thing. We could not move without his aid; the mind cannot think, but by his energy. Were he to deny his power, all motion would ceaſe, were he to withdraw his ſupport, creation would vaniſh and ſpace become an infinite void. We are loſt in wonder, when we contemplate the power of that Being who alone is ſelf-exiſtent and in compariſon, of whom every thing elſe is as nothing.

S. I am now ſo perfectly convinced from your obſervations, of a divine Providence and the creation of matter, that

that was an angel to deſcend from heaven and to promulgate a contrary doctrine, I ſhould not be eaſily prevailed upon to alter my opinion: but will you excuſe me, Sir, when I remind you of my father being in the parlour, whoſe patience by this time I am afraid is almoſt exhauſted.

M. Mr. Thomas, you have done well to remind me, for I declare upon my honour the ſerioufneſs of the ſubject had wholly engroſſed my attention; pleaſe to put the manuſcript in the book-caſe, No. 5, for I muſt immediately go pay my reſpects to your father and make a proper apology for detaining him ſo long.

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